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Chinese Fairy Tales.



Told in English by
H.A. Giles.

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CHINESE FAIRY TALES

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Giles, Herbert Allen

CHINESE FAIRY TALES

TOLD IN ENGLISH BY
PROF. HERBERT A. GILES, CAMBRIDGE

GOWANS & GRAY, LTD., LONDON & GLASGOW
LEROY PHILLIPS, BOSTON, U.S.A.

1920

This little volume of Chinese fairy tales has been written by Dr. Herbert A. Giles, Professor of Chinese in the University of Cambridge, formerly British Consul at Ningpo, China, and for twenty-six years resident in that country. It is intended as a companion to the Japanese fairy tales published in the same series.

It is very interesting to compare the tales in the two volumes. They are equally quaint and delightful, but the national spirit of the Chinese is very different from that of the Japanese, both being reflected in the stories in a thoroughly characteristic manner.

A. L. G.

THE MAGIC PILLOW

ONE day, an old priest stopped at a wayside inn to rest, spread out his mat, and sat down with his bag. Soon afterwards, a young fellow of the neighbourhood also arrived at the inn; he was a farm-labourer and wore short clothes, not a long robe like the priest and men who read books. He took a seat near to the priest and the two were soon laughing and talking together. By and by, the young man cast a glance at his own rough dress and said with a sigh, "See, what a miserable wretch I am." "You seem to me well fed and healthy enough," replied the priest; "why in the middle of our pleasant chat do you suddenly complain of being a miserable wretch?" "What pleasure can I find," retorted the young man, "in this life of mine, working every day as I do from early morn to late at night? I should like to be a great general and win battles, or to be a rich man and have fine food and wine, and listen to good music, or to be a great man at court and help our Emperor and bring prosperity to my family;—that is what I call pleasure. I want to rise in the world, but here I am a poor farm-labourer; if you don't call that miserable wretchedness, what is it?" He then began to get sleepy, and while the landlord was cooking a dish of millet-porridge, the priest took a pillow out of his bag and said to the young man,

“Lay your head on this and all your wishes will be granted.” The pillow was made of porcelain ; it was round like a tube, and open at each end. When the young man put his head down towards the pillow, one of the openings seemed so large and bright inside that he got in, and soon found himself at his own home. Shortly afterwards he married a beautiful girl, and began to make money. He now wore fine clothes and spent his time in study. In the following year he passed his examination and was made a magistrate ; and in two or three years he had risen to be Prime Minister. For a long time the Emperor trusted him in everything, but the day came when he got into trouble ; he was accused of treason and sentenced to death. He was taken with several other criminals to the place of execution ; he was made to kneel on both knees, and the executioner approached with his sword. Too terrified to feel the blow, he opened his eyes, to find himself in the inn. There was the priest with his head on his bag ; and there was the landlord still stirring the porridge, which was not quite ready. After eating his meal in silence, he got up and bowing to the priest, said, “I thank you, sir, for the lesson you have taught me ; I know now what it means to be a great man !” With that, he took his leave and went back to his work.

THE STONE MONKEY

LONG, long ago, on the top of a mountain called the Flower-and-Fruit Mountain, there lay all by itself a queer-shaped stone egg. No one knew what bird had laid it, or how it had got there; no one ever saw it, for there was nobody there to see. The egg lay all by itself on some green grass, until one day it split with a crack, and out came a stone monkey, a monkey whose body was of shining polished stone. Before long, this wonderful stone monkey was surrounded by a crowd of other monkeys, chattering to one another as hard as they could. By and by they seemed to have settled something in their minds, and one of them came forward and asked the stone monkey to be their king. This post he accepted at once, having indeed already thrown out hints that he thought himself quite fit to rule over them.

Soon after this, he determined to travel in search of wisdom, and to see the world. He went down the mountain, until he came to the sea-shore, where he made himself a raft, and sailed away. Reaching the other side of the great ocean, he found his way to the abode of a famous magician, and persuaded the magician to teach him all kinds of magical tricks. He learned to make himself invisible, to fly up into the sky, and to jump many miles at a single jump. At last he began to think himself better and stronger

than anybody else, and determined to make himself Lord of the Sky.

"Have you heard of the new king of the monkeys?" said the Dragon prince to the Lord Buddha one day, as they were sitting together in the palace of the sky. "No," answered the Lord Buddha. "What is there to hear about him?" "He has been doing a lot of mischief," replied the Dragon prince. "He has learnt all kinds of magical tricks, and knows more than anybody else in the whole world. He now means to turn the Lord of the Sky out of his place, and be Lord of the Sky himself. I promised I would ask you to help us against this impudent stone monkey. If you will be good enough to do so, I feel sure we should conquer him." The Lord Buddha promised to do his best, and the two went together to the cloud palace of the Lord of the Sky, where they found the stone monkey misbehaving himself, and insulting everybody who dared to interfere with him. The Lord Buddha stepped forward, and in a quiet voice said to him, "What do you want?" "I want," answered the stone monkey, "to be Lord of the Sky. I could manage things much better than they are managed now. See how I can jump!" Then the stone monkey jumped a big jump. In a moment he was out of sight, and in another moment he was back again. "Can you do that?" he asked the Lord Buddha; at which the Lord Buddha only smiled and said, "I will make a bargain with you. You shall come outside the palace with me and stand upon my hand. Then, if you can jump out of my hand, you shall be Lord of

the Sky, as you wish to be; but if you cannot jump out of my hand, you shall be sent down to earth, and never be allowed to come up to the sky any more." The stone monkey laughed loudly when he heard this, and said, "Jump out of your hand, Lord Buddha! Why of course I can easily do that." So they went outside the palace, and the Lord Buddha put down his hand, and the stone monkey stepped on to it. He then gave one great jump, and again he was away far out of sight. On and on he went in his jump, until he came to the end of the earth. There he stopped; and while he was chuckling to himself that he would soon be Lord of the Sky, he caught sight of five great red pillars standing on the very edge with nothing but empty space beyond; and now he thought he would leave a mark to show how far he had really jumped. So he scratched a mark on one of the pillars, meaning to bring the Lord Buddha there to see it for himself. When he had done this, he took another big jump, and in the twinkling of an eye he was back again in the Lord Buddha's hand. "When are you going to begin to jump?" the Lord Buddha asked, as the monkey stepped down on to the ground. "When!" cried the monkey sarcastically; "Why, I have jumped,—jumped to the very end of the earth. If you want to know how far I have been, you have only to get on my back, and I'll take you there to see. There are five red pillars there, and I've left a mark on one of them." "Look here, monkey," the Lord Buddha said, holding out his hand; "look at this." The stone monkey looked. On one of the fingers of the Lord Buddha's hand there was the very mark

which he himself had made on the red pillar. "You see," said the Lord Buddha; "the whole world lies in my hand. You could never have jumped out of it. When you jumped, and thought you were out of sight, my hand was under you all the time. No one, not even a stone monkey, can ever get beyond my reach. Now go down to earth, and learn to keep in your proper place."

STEALING PEACHES

WHEN I was a little boy, I went one day to the fair. There were crowds of people there, and the noise, with everyone talking at the top of their voices, drums beating, and music playing, was enough to make a man deaf. In the middle of it all, I saw a man suddenly walk into an open space. He was leading a boy by the hand, and cried out that he would do any trick anyone asked him to do. Now it was a cold day, with snow lying on the ground, and when one of the crowd asked him to get some peaches, the magician didn't seem to like the idea at all. He grumbled and grunted for a bit, but suddenly cheered up, and cried: "Done! Of course I can't get peaches here, in this frosty weather. But I know where they grow, up in the Great Sky Garden. We must try to fetch them from there." So saying, he took out of his box a huge ball of cord. He unfastened a good length of this, and threw it high into the air, where it seemed to hook on to something no one could see. Quickly the man unrolled and unrolled the ball, and all the time the end of the cord that was in the air kept on going higher and higher, till it reached the clouds, and went right out of sight. By this time only a short end of rope remained in the man's hand, and this he threw across to his son, telling him to go up it at once, as he himself was too heavy. The boy begged

his father not to make him go, lest the rope should break, and he should fall from a height and get killed; but his father wouldn't listen to a word, and only told him to be quick about it. So up went the boy, hand over hand, until he too disappeared in the clouds.

A few minutes passed, while I, and all the people round, stood open-mouthed, looking upwards. Then, all of a sudden, down fell the hugest peach I have ever seen. It was quite as big as a basin. The father picked it up with a smiling face, and was just showing the men nearest him that it was a real peach, and inviting them to taste it, when down came the rope with a run, and fell, yards and yards of it, on the ground close to him. "Ai-yah! ai-yah!" he shrieked out, "what will my son do now? How will he get down?" The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when something else fell with a bang. It was the boy's head! Then the poor father began to weep, and tears ran down his cheeks. "The gardener up there must have caught him, poor lad. Why did I send him up? Why did you ask me for peaches? My poor boy, my poor boy, I shall never see you again." While he was speaking, and hugging the dead boy's head, first the arms, then the legs, and last of all, the body of the lad, fell down from the sky. We were all filled with horror at the sight, and the father, gathering the limbs together, put them and the head into his box, and turned to us, saying, "He was my only son. Wherever I used to go, he went. Now I am left alone, to bury him. He lost his life for your peach; will you not give me some money to help pay for his funeral?" By

this time nearly everyone was snuffling or actually weeping outright, and as the father went round, most of us emptied our pockets into his hands. When he had got the money, the father went back to the box, which was lying on the ground, and rapped on it hard. "Sonny, sonny!" he called out, "why don't you come and thank these gentlemen for the money?"

From the inside of the box I heard, quite clearly, a thump. The lid opened by itself, and out jumped the boy, alive and well. The next moment both he and his father had disappeared in the crowd.

THE PAINTED SKIN

A CERTAIN Mr. Wang was out walking one day, when he saw a young lady who was carrying a bundle and trying to make as much haste as she could along the road. She couldn't really walk very fast, because her feet were all cramped and bound up; and as she didn't seem to know her way about, Mr. Wang asked her if he could be of any use. For she was a very pretty girl of about sixteen, so he was surprised to see her out by herself. "I'm very much afraid you can't help me," she answered, and went on to tell him that she had run away from her master and mistress, and had no home to go to, nor any friend to take her in. "My parents," she said, "sold me when I was quite young, and would certainly give me back to my cruel master and mistress." Mr. Wang felt so sorry for her, that he invited her to come and hide in his own house, and as he was afraid lest the servants and his wife would let out where she was, he hid her in his library, which was quite separate from the rest of the house, and into which nobody went but himself.

After a few days, when he thought matters were quite safe, Mr. Wang told his wife about the girl. Mrs. Wang didn't like the idea of keeping her at all, "because," she said, "this girl probably belongs to a very rich and great family; sha'n't we get

into trouble if they find out she is here?" But her husband laughed at her, and said, they had better keep her a little longer. A short time afterwards, however, as Mr. Wang was walking about in the town, he met a priest, who looked at him very hard indeed. "What have you met?" asked the priest. "Nothing in particular," answered Mr. Wang. "What do you mean?" "Why," the priest replied, "you are in the power of a witch; fancy telling me you have met nothing!" And away he walked, not listening to Mr. Wang, but only saying, "What a fool! what a fool! He doesn't know how close he is to dying." Mr. Wang felt frightened when he heard this, and then he remembered the strange girl at his home; but again it seemed to him absurd to think she could be a witch and want to harm him. By this time he had got to his house, and thought he would go to his library, and sit and think it over. But when he tried to open the outside door, he found it bolted; so he had to climb over the wall to get to the inside door, which he also found shut. However, the window was close by, and he crept very softly up to it, and looked through. And there, in full sight, was a hideous witch, with a green face and teeth as jagged as a saw! The witch had spread a girl's skin upon the couch, and she was painting it with a paint-brush. Next moment she threw the paint-brush into a corner, took up the skin and gave it a good shake, threw it over her shoulders, and Mr. Wang saw that it was the girl again!

Off ran Mr. Wang as fast as his shaking legs would allow him, and searched the town from end to end, until he found the priest. He threw

himself upon his knees, and cried out "Save me! save me!" telling him what he had seen. The priest shook his head, and told Mr. Wang he was afraid he couldn't help him much. "At any rate," he added, "I will give you this fly-brush. Hang it at your bedroom door, and meet me by and by at the temple over there." So Mr. Wang went home with the fly-brush. He didn't dare to go into the library, but he hung up the brush at his bedroom door, and calling his wife, went into the room and told her the story. He had scarcely finished, when they heard footsteps outside. "Peep out," Mr. Wang whispered to his wife. She did so, and there stood the girl, looking at the fly-brush as though she was afraid of it, and grinding her teeth in a great rage. To Mrs. Wang's relief, she then went away; but almost directly back she came, stamping and crying out, "Don't think I'm frightened, you priest. Mr. Wang belongs to me, and I won't give him up!" Mrs. Wang had quickly bolted the door, but they heard the girl tearing the brush to pieces, and in a moment smash went the door, and in she walked. She marched straight up to the bed, on which Mr. Wang was lying, ripped open his body and tore out his heart, and went off with it, taking no notice of Mrs. Wang, who was screaming at the top of her voice. The servants, hearing the noise, ran in to see what was the matter, and found Mr. Wang lying dead with a most horrible gash in his body, and Mrs. Wang trembling all over with fright. "Fetch your master's brother," she said, for luckily Mr. Wang's brother lived in the same house, though he and his wife had their own servants and rooms.

Mrs. Wang sent him off directly to see the priest and tell him what had happened. The story put the priest into a great rage, for the witch had got the better of him, so off he came to the house to punish her ; but when he got there the girl had disappeared, no one knew where. However the priest, when he had taken a good look round, said, "She's quite close ; she's in this house, in those rooms over there," pointing to Wang's brother's rooms. "No, no, surely not," said Wang's brother in a terrible fright ; but when he went and asked his wife, she told him that while he had been away fetching the priest, a poor old woman had come to her, and offered to be their maid-of-all-work, and she had engaged her on the spot. "That old woman is the witch," said the priest, and out he went into the courtyard, where he stood with a wooden sword in his hand, and cried out, "O evil witch, give me back my fly-brush !" When she heard the priest's voice, the old woman shook all over with fear, and tried to run away past the priest ; but he hit her with his sword and down she fell in a heap. The painted skin dropped off her, and they saw a hideous witch, grunting like a pig. Then the priest chopped off her head, and she turned into a thick column of smoke which seemed to curl up from the ground. Into the middle of the smoke the priest threw an uncorked gourd, and then they heard a curious noise, and saw the column of smoke being sucked into the gourd, the priest quickly corking it up. After this he rolled up the painted skin, and was quietly walking away, when Mr. Wang's wife rushed forward, and threw herself on the ground at his feet, crying "Pray, pray, help me ! Bring my husband back

to life ! ” The priest looked at her and said, “ I can’t help you, I’m sorry to say. I can’t make a dead man live again, but I know someone who can. Only he must be asked properly.” Mrs. Wang, weeping all the time, said she was ready to do anything. So the priest said, “ Down in the worst part of the town, there lives a madman. He spends all his time rolling about in the mud. You must go to him, and kneel before him, and ask him to help you. Don’t mind how rude he is, don’t mind what he tells you to do ; above all things, don’t lose your temper.” With these words, he went out of the gate, and was soon out of sight.

Mrs. Wang hurried off as fast as she could, and easily found the madman. He was a great deal more filthy and disgusting-looking than she had imagined, but she knelt down before him as she had been told to do, and begged him to help her. But instead of listening kindly, he treated her shamefully, saying all manner of rude and wicked things, until his loud shouting brought a crowd of people to see what was happening. They found the madman beating Mrs. Wang as hard as he could with his stick, while she stood still and didn’t say a word. When he was tired of trying to make her angry, he gave her a perfectly loathsome pill, which she had very hard work to swallow, and then up he got, with a nasty last word, walked into a temple close by, and left her alone with the crowd. Nor could any of them find him again.

Now when Mrs. Wang saw that all her good temper and endurance had been useless, she ran home, feeling so ashamed of what her neighbours had seen that she wished she too were dead. This

made her remember that Mr. Wang must be got ready for his funeral, and as the servants were too frightened to go into the bedroom, she went in, and began to try to close up the terrible gash in his body. But she couldn't help sobbing all the time, sobs that shook her whole body, and seemed to bring a lump right up into her throat. Not only into her throat, but into her mouth; then out of her mouth, pop! something fell right into Mr. Wang's wound. It was his heart! As she stooped down over it, she saw it begin to throb, as though it were coming to life. Trembling with joy and fear, she quickly closed the flesh over the heart, and then bound the wound up, heaping the bed-clothes over her husband, and rubbing his hands and feet to get him warm. By and by she heard a gentle breathing from his nose, and before long Mr. Wang opened his eyes, alive again and well, except for a slight pain in his heart, and a tiny scar where the frightful wound had been. In a few days even the scar disappeared.

THE WONDERFUL PEAR-TREE

ONCE upon a time a countryman came into the town on market-day, and brought a load of very special pears with him to sell. He set up his barrow in a good corner, and soon had a great crowd round him; for everyone knew he always sold extra fine pears, though he did also ask an extra high price. Now, while he was crying up his fruit, a poor, old, ragged, hungry-looking priest stopped just in front of the barrow, and very humbly begged him to give him one of the pears. But the countryman, who was very mean and very nasty-tempered, wouldn't hear of giving him any, and as the priest didn't seem inclined to move on, he began calling him all the bad names he could think of. "Good sir," said the priest, "you have got hundreds of pears on your barrow. I only ask you for one. You would never even know you had lost one. Really, you needn't get angry."

"Give him a pear that is going bad; that will make him happy," said one of the crowd. "The old man is quite right; you'd never miss it."

"I've said I won't, and I won't!" cried the countryman; and all the people close by began shouting, first one thing, and then another, until the constable of the market, hearing the hubbub, hurried up; and when he had made out what was the matter, pulled some *cash* out of his purse, bought a

pear, and gave it to the priest. For he was afraid that the noise would come to the ears of the mandarin who was just being carried down the street.

The old priest took the pear with a low bow, and held it up in front of the crowd, saying, "You all know that I have no home, no parents, no children, no clothes of my own, no food, because I gave everything up when I became a priest. So it puzzles me how anyone can be so selfish and so stingy as to refuse to give me one single pear. Now I am quite a different sort of man from this countryman. I have got here some perfectly exquisite pears, and I shall feel most deeply honoured if you will accept them from me." "Why on earth didn't you eat them yourself, instead of begging for one?" asked a man in the crowd. "Ah," answered the priest, "I must grow them first." So he ate up the pear, only leaving a single pip. Then he took a pick which was fastened across his back, dug a deep hole in the ground at his feet, and planted the pip, which he covered all over with earth. "Will some one fetch me some hot water to water this?" he asked. The people, who were crowding round, thought he was only joking, but one of them ran and fetched a kettle of boiling water and gave it to the priest, who very carefully poured it over the place where he had sowed the pip. Then, almost while he was pouring, they saw, first a tiny green sprout, and then another, come pushing their heads above the ground; then one leaf uncurled, and then another, while the shoots kept growing taller and taller; then there stood before them a young tree with a

few branches with a few leaves ; then more leaves ; then flowers ; and last of all clusters of huge, ripe, sweet-smelling pears weighing the branches down to the ground ! Now the priest's face shone with pleasure, and the crowd roared with delight when he picked the pears one by one until they were all gone, handing them round with a bow to each man present. Then the old man took the pick again, hacked at the tree until it fell with a crash, when he shouldered it, leaves and all, and with a final bow, walked away.

All the time this had been going on, the countryman, quite forgetting his barrow and pears, had been in the midst of the crowd, standing on the tips of his toes, and straining his eyes to try to make out what was happening. But when the old priest had gone, and the crowd was getting thin, he turned round to his barrow, and saw with horror that it was quite empty. Every single pear had gone ! In a moment he understood what had happened. The pears the old priest had been so generous in giving away were not his own ; they were the countryman's ! What was more, one of the handles of his barrow was missing, and there was no doubt that he had started from home with two ! He was in a towering rage, and rushed as hard as he could after the priest ; but just as he turned the corner he saw, lying close to the wall, the barrow-handle itself, which without any doubt was the very pear-tree which the priest had cut down. All the people in the market were simply splitting their sides with laughter ; but as for the priest, no one saw him any more.

THE COUNTRY OF GENTLEMEN

// MORE than a thousand years ago there lived an Empress of China, who was a very bold and obstinate woman. She thought she was powerful enough to do anything. One day, she even gave orders that every kind of flower throughout the country was to be out in full bloom on a certain day. Being a woman herself, she thought that women would govern the empire much better than men; so she actually had examinations for women and gave them all the important posts. This made a great many men extremely angry; especially a young man named Tang, who was very clever and had taken many prizes. He said he couldn't live in such a country any more; and sailed away with an uncle of his and another friend, on a long voyage to distant parts of the world. They visited many extraordinary nations; in one of which, the people all had heads of dogs; in another, they flew about like birds; in another, they had enormously long arms with which they reached down into the water to catch fish. Then there was the country of tall men, where everybody was about twenty feet in height; the country of dwarfs where the people were only one foot in height, and their funny little children were not more than four inches. In another place, the people all had large holes in the middle of their bodies; and rich persons were

carried about by servants who pushed long sticks through the holes. After a time, they came to a land which they were told was the Country of Gentlemen. They went ashore, and walked up to the capital. There they found the people buying and selling, and strange to say they were all talking the Chinese language. They also noticed that everybody was very polite, and the foot-passengers in the streets were very careful to step aside and make room for one another. In the market-place they saw a man who was buying things at a shop. Holding the things in his hand, the man was saying to the shopkeeper, "My dear sir, I really cannot take these excellent goods at the absurdly low price you are asking. If you will oblige me by doubling the amount, I shall do myself the honour of buying them; otherwise I shall know for certain that you do not wish to do business with me to-day." The shopkeeper replied, "Excuse me, sir, I am already very much ashamed at having asked you so much for these goods; they really are not worth more than half. If you insist upon paying such a high price, I must really beg you, with all possible respect, to go and buy in some other shop." At this, the man who wanted to buy got rather angry, and said that trade could not be carried on at all if all the profit was on one side and all the loss on the other, adding that the shopkeeper was not going to catch him in a trap like that. After a lot more talk, he put down the full price on the counter, but only took half the things. Of course the shopkeeper would not agree to this, and they would have gone on arguing for ever had not two old gentlemen who

happened to be passing stepped aside and arranged the matter for them by deciding that the purchaser was to pay the full price but only to receive three-quarters of the goods. Tang heard this sort of thing going on at every shop he passed. It was always the buyer who wanted to give as much as possible, and the seller to take as little. In one case a shopkeeper called after a customer who was hurrying away with the goods he had bought and said, "Sir, sir, you have paid me too much, you have paid me too much." "Pray don't mention it," replied the customer, "but oblige me by keeping the money for another day when I come again to buy some more of your excellent goods." "No, no," answered the shopkeeper; "you don't catch old birds with chaff, that trick was played upon me last year by a gentleman who left some money with me, and to this day I have never set eyes upon him again though I have tried all I can to find out where he lives." But soon they had to say good-bye to this wonderful country and started once more upon their voyage. They next came to a very strange land where the people did not walk, but moved about upon small clouds of different colours, about half a foot from the ground. Meeting with an old priest, who seemed rather a queer man, Tang asked him to be kind enough to explain the meaning of the little clouds upon which the people rode. "Ah sir," said the priest, "these clouds show what sort of a heart is inside the persons who are riding on them. People can't choose their own colours; clouds striped like a rainbow are the best; yellow are the second best, and black are the worst of all." Thanking the old man, they passed on and among

those who were riding on clouds of green, red, blue and other colours, they saw a dirty beggar riding on a striped cloud. They were much astonished at this because the old priest had told them that the striped cloud was the best. "I see why that was," said Tang, "the old rascal had a striped cloud himself." Just then the people in the street began to fall back, leaving a passage in the middle; and by and by they saw a very grand officer pass along in great state with a long procession of servants carrying red umbrellas, gongs, and other things. They tried to see what colour his cloud was, but to their disappointment it was covered up with a curtain of red silk. "Oho!" said Tang, "this gentleman has evidently got such a bad colour for his cloud that he is ashamed to let it be seen. I wish we had clouds like these in our country so that we could tell good people from bad by just looking at them. I don't think there would be so many wicked men about then." Soon after this, news reached them that the Empress who had been so troublesome in their own country had been obliged to give up the throne. So they went no further on their travels but turned their ship round towards home, where their families were very glad to see them again.

LEARNING MAGIC

MANY years ago, there was a man named Sung, who was not very fond of work but longed to be a magician and do all kinds of wonderful tricks. So one day off he went to a temple on a mountain, and there he found an old priest, with long hair flowing down his back, and sitting on a rush mat. Making a low bow, Sung asked the priest if he would be kind enough to teach him magic. "Ah," replied the priest, "I am afraid you are not strong enough for that." Sung begged the priest to let him try; and so he was allowed to stay in the temple and join in with the other pupils. Very early next morning the priest sent for him, and giving him a hatchet told him to go out and cut firewood. This he went on doing every day for a month, until his hands and feet were so sore that he secretly began to wish himself home again. One evening, when he came back, he found two strangers drinking wine with the priest. It was already dark, and as no candles had been brought in, the old priest took a pair of scissors, and cut out a round piece of paper which he stuck upon the wall. Immediately it became bright as the moon, and lighted up the whole room. Then, one of the strangers took a kettle of wine, and told the pupils to help themselves. Sung wondered how they would all get enough to drink out of such a small kettle, but to his astonishment


there was plenty for everybody, and more still left in the kettle. Then the other stranger said, "Why not get the Lady of the Moon to come and join us?" So he seized a chopstick and threw it into the moon, and at once a lovely young girl stepped out. At first she was only a foot high; but on reaching the ground, she became as tall as an ordinary woman. She sang a pretty song, with a voice like a flute, and when she had finished she danced round and round, and at last jumped up on the table, where to the astonishment of everybody she became a chopstick again. "Very good," said one of the strangers, "now we must bid you good night, as we are going to drink a glass of wine in the palace of the moon." The strangers then picked up the table and walked into the moon, where they could be seen quite plainly talking and drinking together. By and by the moon suddenly went out; and when the pupils brought lighted candles they found the priest sitting in the dark alone, with the piece of paper on the wall. The priest then sent them to bed, so that they should not be late with their wood-cutting in the morning. But after a time, Sung could not stand this any longer; and as the priest taught him no magical tricks, he went to him and said, "I have been here three months, doing nothing but chop firewood, work to which I was never accustomed before. I now wish to go home." "Well," said the priest, "I told you that you were not strong enough. You can go home to-morrow." "Sir," said Sung, "I have worked for you a long time; please teach me some little trick that I may not have come all this long way for nothing." "What trick would you like to learn?" asked the priest.

"Well," answered Sung, "I have noticed that whenever you walk about anywhere, you are not stopped by walls; you walk through them. Teach me this, and I shall be satisfied." The priest laughed and told him to say, *Hobbery jibbery snobbery snoo*, at the same time walking through the wall. Sung walked up to the wall, but couldn't get through it; so the priest said, "Don't go so slowly; put your head down and run at it." Sung did as he was told, and the next moment found himself outside the temple. Delighted at this, he went in to thank the priest, who told him to be very careful and not show off too much. When Sung got home he went about bragging of what he could do; but as people disbelieved his story, he determined to prove to them that he was telling the truth. In order to do this, he put his head down and rushed at a wall, but he only hit the bricks very hard and was knocked down flat on the ground. When he was picked up he had a bump on his forehead as big as an egg, at which everybody roared with laughter.

THEFT OF A DUCK

IN a country village, there lived an honest old farmer, named Chang, who had a large flock of fine fat ducks. One day, a good-for-nothing fellow named Lin who lived near by, stole one of these ducks and carried it off to his home and ate it for supper. In the middle of the night he began to itch violently all over; and when morning came, he found to his horror that he was entirely covered with feathers which were growing out of his skin and now began to smart terribly. He was in great pain all day but at night he managed to get off to sleep, and then he dreamt that a man appeared to him and said, "You are being punished for stealing that duck; and you will never get well until you go to Mr. Chang and make him say, 'You dirty thief!'" Lin was very much troubled at this, but he soon thought of a plan by which he hoped to escape. He went to see Mr. Chang and said to him, "Sir, I have something to tell you privately. Your duck was stolen by old Wang who lives down the road; he doesn't like being called bad names, and if you go and say to him 'You dirty thief!' he will be sure to pay you for the duck and will take care never to steal any more." At this, Mr. Chang laughed loudly, and said, "I haven't got time to go about calling people bad names, all for the loss of a duck; I won't do anything of the kind." Just

then Lin's skin began to smart so dreadfully that he had nothing left but to fall on his knees and own that he himself had stolen the duck, and implore Mr. Chang to say "You dirty thief!" to him. To this Mr. Chang replied, that he had never been in the habit of using bad language and that he certainly was not going to begin doing so. However, when Lin opened his shirt and showed Mr. Chang the feathers which had grown all over his body, and told him with tears in his eyes what pain he was suffering, Mr. Chang at last consented, and said to him, "You dirty thief!" From that moment the feathers disappeared from his body, and he took care never to steal ducks again.



LIVING FOR EVER

HUNDREDS of years ago, there were a great many learned men in China, who were always trying to find out something which would make them live for ever. They mixed up all kinds of things together, and boiled them for a long time over the fire, and then drank the juice. Some of them were soon poisoned, while all the rest made themselves very ill, and did not live any longer than other people. One man sent a bottle of his mixture to the king, only it never reached his Majesty, because it was stolen and drunk up by the door-keeper of the palace. At this the king was very angry, and sent for the door-keeper and ordered his head to be cut off on the spot. But the door-keeper said, "Please, your Majesty, if you kill me, it shows that the medicine I drank cannot make people live for ever; so that it would have been of no use to your Majesty." The king laughed at this, and let him off.

However, there was another man, who had spent about fifty years in trying to make this wonderful medicine. He had mixed up every kind of drug and plant it was possible to get hold of, and he had tried his mixture on a great number of old people; but all of them had died, some perhaps sooner than they would otherwise have done. Well, one day as he was sitting at a table in his garden, working

away at his mixtures, he was so pleased with a new kind he had made that he felt positive he had found the secret at last. So he determined, before giving it to anybody else, to make sure of some for himself, and there and then he drank off nearly a cupful. Immediately, he felt himself rising slowly from the ground, and soon he began going faster and faster, until he was quite high up in the air. This seemed to frighten him, for he dropped the cup with a lot of the mixture in it. The cup fell in his backyard, and the cocks and hens ran at once to get a sip of the mixture, thinking it was probably something good to eat. His dog too ran to take a lick, and even the cat had a taste. Very soon they were all sailing after their master up into the sky, and gradually passed out of sight, and were never heard of again.

FOOTBALL ON A LAKE

THE two Chais, father and son, were known for miles round their home as first-class football players. Even up to the time he was forty the father went on with the game, and might have been playing till sixty if he hadn't come to a sad end, being drowned in the great lake near by. Now, about eight years afterwards, young Chai had to go a long journey which took him across this same lake, and as it was already evening, he determined to anchor his boat for the night. It was a lovely moonlight night, when suddenly, as he sat enjoying the view, he saw a very strange sight. Up out of the lake came five men carrying a huge mat, which they spread on the top of the water. Next they brought up bowls of food, and wine in kettles,—they could scarcely have been ordinary bowls and kettles, because when the men knocked them together there was no sound of crockery or metal, but a funny, wooden-like sound difficult to describe. When the food was all spread on the mat, three of the men sat down to eat, while the other two, one a grown man and the other a boy, handed the dishes round. Chai couldn't see their faces, but he noticed that the three who were waited upon were grandly dressed, one in yellow and two in white, with big black turbans on their heads; as for the servants, they had only black serge robes. While he watched

the supper party, it struck Chai that the older servant was decidedly like his own father, so he listened hard to catch his voice, and was very disappointed when he found it quite different. By and by, when the three men had eaten and drunk as much as they could, Chai heard one of them say, "Let's have a game of football;" and while he was wondering what they could possibly mean by this, he saw the boy dive into the water, right out of sight, and come up in a moment with a monster ball. It was so large that he could scarcely carry it, and it seemed full of quicksilver, and it glittered inside and out so that Chai's eyes were quite dazzled with it. The three men got up from their supper, and called to the older servant to come and join the game. Up went the ball, ten, fifteen feet high in the air, sparkling and shining; down it came; up again, until at last, when the game had got to its most exciting point, down it fell in quite the wrong place, in fact, right in the middle of Chai's boat! This was more than Chai could bear, and in an instant he had kicked it as hard as he could. But there was something queer about the ball too. It was as light as a feather, and as soft as rice-paper, and Chai's foot went right through it. Still, he sent it up into the sky, many-coloured lights streaming from the hole he had made, until at last down it fell in a big curve like a comet, touched the water, fizzed, and then went out. "Ho! ho!" cried the players in a rage, "Who is this miserable man who dares to meddle in our game?" "Well kicked, well kicked indeed!" said the old servant. "Why, that's a favourite kick of my own." But the other players only got twice as angry when they

heard this, and cried out, "You old wretch, how dare you joke when we have just had our game spoilt? Look out for yourself, or you'll get a touch of the bamboo. Go at once, and take the boy with you, and bring back this man, or it will be the worse for you!" Now when Chai heard these words, and saw the two coming for him, with swords in their hands, he didn't feel a scrap frightened, but picked up his sword and stood ready for them in the very middle of the boat.

By this time the old man and the boy were on the boat, and Chai saw at once that his father stood before him. So he called out, "Father! father! look at me. I'm your son, young Chai." The old man was startled almost out of his wits, and was so overjoyed at finding his son that he didn't notice for an instant that the boy had slipped away, and had gone back to the players. But next moment he remembered the danger they were in, and was just calling to young Chai to hide when the three players jumped on board the boat. Seen close, they were absolutely terrifying, with faces as black as pitch, and rolling eyes as big as pomegranates. They pounced upon the old man, and were just going to carry him off, when young Chai who had untied his boat from her moorings, wheeled round with his sword, cut off one man's arm, and chopped off another man's head, so that his body fell splash into the water. When the third man saw what had happened to his friends, he disappeared in a moment no one could tell how; and Chai and his father finding themselves clear, made haste to get the boat away.

Suddenly, however, a great mouth yawned open

in the lake. It was as big and as deep as a well, and out of it blew a roaring wind, which lashed the water into monster waves, and made the other boats and junks pitch and toss. On it came, nearer and nearer, and in a moment more Chai's boat would have been swallowed whole, had he not seized one of two huge round stones which were kept to use as anchors, and thrown it into the huge mouth, which immediately shut upon it. After this Chai heaved the other stone overboard, and in an instant the wind died down, and the water became calm again. Then, as they were sailing quietly along, Chai's father told him his story. "I was never drowned," he said. "All the men who were with me when the boat was lost were eaten by the fish-goblins down below. I was spared because I could play football. What do you think that football was made of, the one you broke? It was part of a fish. And that arm you cut off, look at it. It is a fish's fin; and the men you saw playing with me are the fish-goblins who serve the Dragon King. Now let us make haste, and get away from this place before he catches us."

THE FLOWER FAIRIES

HIGH up on a mountain there was a place where many beautiful flowers grew, mostly peonies and camellias, often to a height of ten or twenty feet. A young man named Hwang, who wanted to study, built himself a little house near by ; and one day he noticed from his window a young lady dressed in white, wandering about amongst the flowers. When he went out to see who she was, she ran behind a white peony and disappeared. After this, he began to watch for her ; and before very long, he saw her come back again bringing with her another young lady dressed in red. But when he got near to them, the young lady in red gave a scream, and away they went in a fright with their skirts and long sleeves fluttering in the wind, and scenting all the air around. Hwang dashed after them, but they soon ran behind some flowers and vanished completely. That evening, as he was sitting over his books, he was astonished to see the white girl walk in, and with tears in her eyes implore him to help her. Hwang asked what was the matter, and tried to comfort her ; but she did not seem able to tell him exactly what the danger was, and by and by she got up and wished him good night. This appeared to Hwang as very strange ; however next day a visitor came, who, after wandering round the garden, was much taken with a white peony which

he dug up and carried away with him. Hwang now knew that the white girl was a flower spirit, and became very sad in consequence of what had happened. Later on, he heard that the peony had only lived a few days after being taken away, at which he wept bitterly ; and going to the hole from which it had been dug up, he watered the ground with his tears. While he was weeping over this loss he suddenly saw the young lady of the red clothes standing beside him, and wiping away her tears. "Alas!" she said, "that my dear sister should be thus torn away from me ; but the tears, sir, which you have shed may perhaps be the means of restoring her to us." That night he dreamt that the red girl came to him again and said that she also was in trouble, begging him to try to rescue her. In the morning he found that a new house was to be built close by, and that the builder, finding a beautiful red camellia in his way, had given orders that it should be cut down. Hwang managed to prevent the destruction of the flower ; and the same evening the red girl came to thank him, this time accompanied by her white sister. The red girl explained that the Flower-God, touched by Hwang's tears, had allowed the white girl to come back to life. At this, Hwang greatly rejoiced, but when he grasped the white girl's hand, his fingers seemed to go right through it, and to close only on themselves, not as in the days gone by. The white girl said to him, "When I was a flower spirit, I had a body ; but now I am no longer a real person, only a kind of ghost as seen in a dream, though I still have my home in the white peony, beside the red camellia, my sister." Hwang, however, was

so grieved at the loss of the white girl, that soon after he fell ill and died. He was buried by his own wish alongside of the white peony, and before very long another white peony grew up, straight out of Hwang's grave.

THE TALKING BIRD

THERE WAS a man who had a pet bird, very like a starling, which he taught to talk ; and the bird was in the habit of travelling about with him all over the country as his companion. This went on for some years, until once he found himself far away from home with all his money spent and without means of getting home. He was in a great state of perplexity, when suddenly the bird said to him, "Why not sell me? Try to get me into the prince's palace ; I ought to fetch a good sum, and then you will have enough to get home with." To this the man said, "My dear bird, I couldn't do it ; I couldn't bear to part with you." "Never mind that," said the bird ; "Wait for me under the big tree a little way out of the city." So he took the bird along, chattering together as they went, until he was seen by a eunuch of the palace, who promptly reported to the prince. The prince at once sent for the man and offered to buy the bird ; but the man said that he and the bird were leading their lives together and could not possibly be parted. Then the prince turned to the bird and said, "Would you like to live here?" "Very much indeed," replied the bird ; "give my master ten ounces of silver for me, not more." The prince was delighted with the bird, and immediately gave orders for the ten ounces to be weighed out and

given to the man, who went away grumbling at his bad luck. The prince had a long conversation with the bird, and by and by sent for some meat for it to eat. After this, the bird said, "Please, your Highness, may I have a bath?" At this the prince told the servants to bring water in a golden bowl, and he opened the cage door for the bird to come out. The bird splashed about in the bath; and when it had finished, flew up and perched on the eaves of the palace, where it shook itself and smoothed its feathers, talking all the time to the prince. When it was quite dry it suddenly said "Good-bye, your Highness; I'm off!" And in half a moment the bird was out of sight. The prince was very angry, and immediately sent out to call the man back; but he had disappeared. Later on some people saw the man and the bird back again in their own old home.

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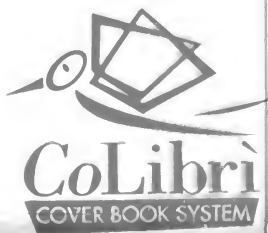
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